

Final
Rezoning Recommendation
of the
East Renton Plateau
Citizens Task Force

December 13, 2006

City of Renton
Department of:
Economic Development, Neighborhoods, Strategic Planning
Alex Pietsch, Administrator
www.rentonwa.gov



The East Renton Plateau Citizen Task Force
was appointed by Mayor Kathy Keolker
on September 25, 2006

Task Force Members:

Kerry Abercrombie
Rhonda Bryant
Tom Carpenter
Bob Chamberlain
Sheila Hurst
Stephanie Lorenz
Brian Thomas
Michael Turner
Kevin Wyman

Introduction

The East Renton Plateau Citizen Task Force is composed of a group of citizen volunteers, appointed by the Mayor, approved by the City Council, and established to review community-planning issues. The task force members were recruited through the Four Creeks Unincorporated Area Council, the Citizens Alliance for a Responsible Evendell, the Five Star Athletic Club, and through advertisement in the Renton Reporter. Individuals on the task force represent themselves rather than any organizations.

Purpose

The purpose of the Task Force is to make recommendations on area pre-zoning for the portion of the East Renton Plateau that is within the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). Another purpose of the Task Force is to make recommendations regarding community-planning issues relevant to the East Renton Plateau, such as transportation, parks, community character, and the transition from urban to rural areas. Finally, the Task Force will also review the adopted City of Renton Comprehensive Plan vision for the East Renton Plateau.

This report is the final report identifying the proposed pre-zoning recommendations of the Task Force for the Plateau and the associated policy changes pursuant to the zoning recommendation. Additionally, the Task Force has made a recommendation regarding changes to the City of Renton animal regulations in response to concern from residents of the East Renton Plateau.

The Task Force

The Task Force membership is comprised of nine volunteer members of the East Renton Plateau community who are business owners, employees, property owners, and/or residents who represent locations throughout the Potential Annexation Area (PAA). Task Force members were appointed by the Mayor and ratified by City Council.

Mission/Goals

The primary goal for the Task Force was to develop a Proposed Pre-Zoning Map for the East Renton Plateau within the UGB. There has been a significant amount of public input through public meetings, emails, letters, phone messages, and in person at Task Force meetings. The Task Force considered all comments and many of those comments are reflected in this final recommendation. Next, members will begin working on the goal of making further recommendations regarding other issues they have identified as significant to the East Renton Plateau, such as transportation, parks, community character, and a possible new zoning designation.

In order to formulate this pre-zoning recommendation there was a significant amount of information and City of Renton policies that members were required to develop a familiarity with. Some of that information included:

- Pre-zoning proposals and processes
- Planning, Growth Management, and Zoning
- Existing City policies for the area and City responsibilities under Growth Management

Process

The Task Force has met weekly with City staff. After initial briefing sessions, each member developed his or her own recommendations for the pre-zoning map. These individual maps were then grouped into three general overarching concepts: a considerable amount of R-1, a blend of R-1 with R-4, and somewhat more R-4 residential. Members achieved consensus on the identification of the area to be mapped Resource Conservation, the area that is R-8, and on most of the areas to be identified as R-4 and R-1. City staff then examined the three concept maps for consistency with City of Renton zoning code and mapping criteria. The Task Force consolidated the three maps with City code to establish a proposed map that meets Renton Zoning Code and mapping criteria. The Task Force has received input from fellow Plateau community members and property owners at the public meetings that has helped provide insight and is reflected in the final recommendation for the pre-zoning map.

Constraints

The East Renton Plateau is an area with some significant environmental constraints. As a plateau it has areas with steep slopes of greater than 40 percent grade, streams that flow off the Plateau into the Cedar River and May Creek, and wetlands. As shown on Table-1 these environmental constraints dictate a zoning designation of either Resource Conservation or R-1 in the related areas.

The area is designated for additional growth under the King County and Renton Comprehensive Plans. Because there is vacant land the area has capacity for future growth. While there is pressure for development at the present time, the lack of sewer is a constraint on development. Steep slopes, streams, and wetlands make sewer extension costly and unlikely until growth pressure elevates the value of those areas. Due to these significant environmental constraints, the area is likely to remain on septic systems for the foreseeable future.

The City of Renton's Comprehensive Plan

All zoning is required by law to be consistent with the City of Renton's existing Comprehensive Plan and zoning policies. The current designation under the Comprehensive Plan is Residential Low Density (RLD), with a very small area designated Residential Single Family (RSF). The City's RLD Land Use designation

allows for three possible classifications: 1 dwelling unit/10 acres (RC), 1 dwelling unit/acre (R-1), and a maximum of 4 dwelling units/acre (R-4).

The RSF Land Use designation allows for densities from 4 dwelling units/acre to 8 dwelling units/acre.

The Proposed Pre-Zoning Map of the area meets all requirements of consistency with the Renton Comprehensive Plan. The Map almost exclusively RLD Land Use with a 6.15 acre area designated RSF. The Comprehensive Plan outlines the mapping criteria for each zoning designation and has been applied to this map. Table 1 outlines the details of the mapping criteria for each designation.

The Final Pre-Zoning Map

The attached map is the Final Pre-Zoning Map for the East Renton Plateau. It reflects the areas of consensus identified by the Task Force. Members have proposed a map that is the best application of Renton's adopted residential low-density policies from the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Properties have been designated with R-1 zoning where the Task Force documented pervasive critical areas within a large area based on environmental constraints included in the City's GIS inventory, information submitted by the public, and information from the United States Geological Survey. The Final Recommended Pre-Zoning Map has been submitted to the Planning Commission.

The Final Map is intended to balance the pressure of development inside the UGA while addressing environmental constraints and maintaining environmental quality. In general terms, the following pre-zoning designations have been applied to the following areas:

- Resource Conservation – proposed for the southwest and westernmost portion of the mapped area.
- R-1 – proposed for the eastern and southeast portion of the mapped area. Also, for a portion of the northeastern area.
- R-4 – proposed for essentially the remainder of the mapped area.
- R-8 – proposed for a small area (6.5 acres) on a western tip of the mapped area.

Bonus Overlay

The Task Force recognizes that while the area that is designated R-1 has environmental constraints and lacks sewer service; it is likely that there are some parcels that are not heavily constrained with environmental limitations. The Task Force recommends implementation of a bonus overlay district intended to allow for properties without environmental constraints, to be developed at the maximum Residential Low Density Comprehensive Plan designation densities.

In order for any property to be eligible for a density bonus it would be necessary to demonstrate that any development of the property could be achieved without any alteration of critical areas and/or variances on grading, filing and alteration of wetlands,

or dewatering of the site. If a property could be developed according to the aforementioned standards, then upon achievement of additional bonus criteria a property could achieve bonus density. The bonus criteria will include provisions that help retain the environmental integrity of the R-1 designated area. The Task Force recommends a two tier system where:

- the area to the east of 175th Avenue Southeast can bonus up to a maximum density of two dwelling units per acre. This area is designated with a lower density bonus due to the pattern of development, the lack of sewer service in the area, and the pervasive creek and steep slopes that characterize this area. An outline of recommended bonus criteria is attached.
- the area to the west of 175th Avenue Southeast can bonus up to four dwelling units per acre.

Application of these zoning designations is consistent with the Renton Zoning Code purpose statements. These Zoning Code statements are available in Table 1.

Minority Report: Abercrombie, Lorenz, and Wyman

This minority report is submitted to reflect areas on which the Task Force could not achieve consensus. The principal issue of contention is the definition and application of pervasive environmental constraints; the Task Force was in consensus that this is the principal point of difference.

Prezoning Map

The minority group is in consensus with the Task Force on the zoning designations for the Resource Conservation area, the R-4 area, and R-8. The area that the minority group proposes alternate mapping is for the R-1 designation. The minority recommendation is to:

- delineate the boundary line for the R-1 designation at 175th Avenue Southeast. The area west of 175th Avenue Southeast zoned as R-4 designation with a base density of two dwelling units per acre and a bonus up to four dwelling units per acre with bonus criteria. **Please note the R-4 overlay with a base density of two dwelling units and bonus criteria is considered to be the best option (by far) for the entire R-4 area by the minority group. Higher quality development than that along NE 4th is a priority.
- The area to the east of this boundary should remain R-1, with a bonus up to two dwelling units per acre.

Rationale

The area west of this suggested boundary is not as severely limited by pervasive environmental constraints, especially topographical, as the area to the east. The area to the east of 175th Avenue Southeast has significant topographical constraints that make the

extension of sewer to this area challenging and cost prohibitive. The City of Renton's Critical Areas Ordinance is expected to sufficiently mitigate impacts of development on environmentally constrained property, such as may be present in some cases west of 175th Avenue Southeast.

The base density of two dwelling units per acre in the R-4 zone is intended to facilitate the development of quality residential projects. The application of the base density is further intended to enable owners of one acre or greater to subdivide their property once without achieving bonus criteria. The minority believes that this is a reasonable means balance the needs of individual property owners with the ability of property developers to build high quality homes with aesthetic appeal that benefit surrounding community.

Additional Minority Recommendations

The Task Force minority strongly encourages further refinement of the Bonus Overlay density option.

- End of Minority Report -

Additional Recommendations

The Task Force is in consensus regarding the following additional recommendations. The Task Force recommends that the City of Renton:

- change the appropriate policies to eliminate the restriction on cluster development that requires cluster development to be located within 600 feet of the R-8 designation. Cluster development should be allowed anywhere in the R-4 zone.
- change animal regulations to allow two large animals per acre.
 - Also, the clause in City code that does not allow for animal replacement when use in non-conforming should be eliminated.
 - The Task Force recommends the right of grandfathered non-conforming animals remain with the property if the property is sold, rather than the right to non-conforming animal use being discontinued upon the sale of the property.
 - Finally, it is recommended that applications for greater number of animals than allowable be changed from a Hearing Examiner conditional use to an Administrative Conditional Use.
- require adherence to design guidelines for the R-4 area, as well as, in order to achieve a bonus in the R-1 area. Possible bonus criteria are attached.
- establish a fund that would be dedicated to improvements, such as street trees, on the East Renton Plateau.

Next Steps

The East Renton Plateau Task Force has identified many topics that they look forward to working on in the future. Some of those issues are: traffic, parks, community character, function as a transition area, community vision, design guidelines, and a possible new zoning designation. After the Task Force has completed their work on these issues, they will have completed the scope of their work. The Task Force will not act in an advisory capacity on any actual development activity in the area.